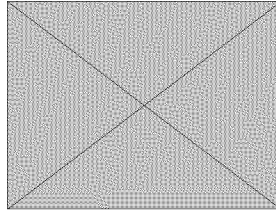


To: Mitre, Alfreda[Mitre.Alfreda@epa.gov]
From: Russell Begaye
Sent: Wed 12/28/2016 10:25:52 PM
Subject: How President Obama has protected our sacred land for future generations:



I am very proud to be both Navajo and American. As the President of the Navajo Nation, I've dedicated my life to ensuring that, as a Navajo, my story -- and our stories are part of our collective American history. Today, I want to share one of those stories with you.

There was a time when our nations, American and Navajo, were at war with each other -- when the U.S. Cavalry forcibly rounded up Navajo men, women, and children, and marched them at gunpoint to a foreign land hundreds of miles away. During this time, some of my Navajo ancestors successfully hid at a sacred place of prayer, shelter, and fortitude: the Bears Ears area of Utah.

Bears Ears National Monument

This beautiful piece of land stretches for over a million acres across the southern edge of the state. Its ancient cliff dwellings, ceremonial sites, abundant rock art, countless cultural artifacts, winding creek beds, and expanses of desert land, contain the great history of my nation.

This place served to protect my family then, just as it has protected many Native American people throughout the years.

Today, President Barack Obama has signed a proclamation to protect this land as a national monument for future generations of Navajo people and for all Americans. Thanks to his action, this land will be finally given the legal reverence and protection it deserves.

This action reflects the President's profound record on conservation: He has done more than any other president in history to set aside more land and water for the future.

But it is also in accordance with his actions to elevate the voices of Native people. Five sovereign tribal nations petitioned to have this irreplaceable land conserved.

Bears Ears National Monument is sacred not only to the Diné people, but also our Hopi, Ute, and Zuni neighbors. These tribes came together in an unprecedented show of unity to conserve these lands for future generations of all Americans. This intertribal coalition also pushed for a new standard for national monuments and tribal involvement.

Thankfully, President Obama and his team listened to our sovereign nations.

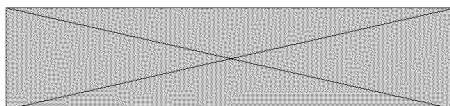
With this step to protect and conserve these irreplaceable lands, he has set a new precedent for national monument tribal collaborative management. And he has strengthened the relationship between our Navajo and American nations.

As both Navajo and American, I am proud our President listened to a sovereign appeal and acted to preserve our sacred land for future generations.

Thank you for listening,

Russell Begaye

President, Navajo Nation



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